

*There Was the True Light*

John 1:6-13

Reading: Psalm 139

Bethany Baptist Church

January 19, 2019

December 12, 2010

...*pray*...

If an **OT prophet** (let's say *Elijah*) *showed up in town & preached a one week revival in Smith-Cotton stadium* – would **that** get your *attention*? Do you think it would *change* your life... forever?

Or, what if *Jesus Himself* appeared at the *Fair Grounds & fed* the entire town of *Sedalia* out of a single *brown-paper bag* (a large *Coke & three corn dogs*)?

Then, what if Christ then *preached* from **this** pulpit the very next *Sunday morning*, and called you to *repent & believe*. Would you *follow* Him?

How **did** the world *respond* when the “*Light of Men*” dwelt among us?

**Turn w/ me to John 1:1-18.** Last Sunday (**1-5**) we read John's *clear & emphatic* claim that *Christ “the Word” is fully God*. John immediately *drives that point home* w/ several *assertions*:

- Christ is *eternal, distinct, & divine*.
- Christ was the *agent of creation*.
- He is the *unconquered Life and Light of men*.
- All of these are *claims of Jesus' deity*.

This morning we'll consider **vv.6-13**.

The *Light* comes into His world, *heralded* by the prophet *John the Baptist*, only to be *rejected* by most (including *His own nation!*), yet... *received* by the *elect*.

**John surveys the dawning of Light in a darkened world, in three movements:**

**First - The prophet preaches (6-8).**

**Next - The Light arrives (9-10).**

**Then (& still today!) - The world responds ...or not (10-13).**

**How will you respond...?**

## The Prophet *preaches* (read vv.6-8).

1. It had been **400** years of *silence*.... **Four** *centuries* since God had sent a *real prophet* to speak to His *people*.
2. The *shift* from **v.5** to **v. 6** is a little *abrupt*. The *Gospel of John* doesn't *waste* much time bringing us *up to speed* on *John the Baptist* – John *assumes* his *first readers* already knew a lot about the *prophet*.
  - a. But he makes **one** important *point*: John *came* – lit. *became*. It's the same *becoming/begetting* word we saw up in **v.3**. OBTW, "*begat*" = *conceived, born*
  - b. In other words, when it comes to comparing the *identity of John* to *Jesus* – **John** *became*, but **Jesus** (Word) *always was*. (We'll *get back* to that...)
  - c. The *Gospels* have a lot to say about John the Baptist. This man had *serious prophet's credentials*.
    - i. **John's appearing** was *predicted* **4** centuries earlier in **Mal 3:1** – *Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me.; John's birth* was *miraculous* (aged Zacharias; barren Eliz.); **the angel announced** John's mission to Zacharias (*before John conceived*); **the Spirit inspired** Zacharias' *own prophecy* regarding his infant son's mission. There was the **God-ordained timing** of John's public ministry, preparing the path for Messiah. There is **the inspired testimony** of his *identity & mission* in all the Gospels – including *here!*
    - ii. And of course, there would be **Jesus' own** endorsement of *John* (Mt 11:14): "*If you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come.*"

- d. John had a *prophet's credentials & a prophet's lifestyle!* Do remember his *wardrobe & his diet?*
- i. **Mk 1:6** – John was **clothed** w/ camel's hair & a leather belt around his waist, & his **diet** was locusts & wild honey.
  - ii. John's *austere lifestyle* was a reminder of the **OT** prophet *Elijah*, and also in keeping w/ the **OT** *prescription* for a *Nazarite* – an individual *dedicated* to God.
3. **V. 6** is John the Baptist's *bio*; then **vv. 7-8** sums up the prophet's *mission*.
- a. We said (**6**) that John was “*sent*” from God. It suggests the idea of *commissioning*.
  - b. John the Baptist's *mission* was to be a *witness to the Light*. To give **testimony** to the *coming* Christ. It's *courtroom* vocab! It demands a *truthful* msg. (*Witness (testimony)* is a very imp't. *theme* in this Gospel. John the Baptist appears as the *first* of **8** *witnesses* that the apostle *summons* to *witness* for Christ.)
  - c. John's *testimony* is summed-up in **Mark 1:4, 7-8 (turn/read)**. Do you see **v.7** – “*After me...One is coming.*” That's John's *testimony!* And the *right response* for John's listeners was to *believe* that Messiah was almost there, to *repent* of their sins, & to prove their *readiness & faith* by receiving John's *baptism*.
  - d. Then our text (Jn) makes a pointed *clarification* (**8**).... John is a *prophet*, but still **just a man**. He is **not** the *Light*. (Some of John's *followers* were confused about that – even **100** years later!) John's job was only to *prepare* Israel for the *Light*.
4. Yet here's how Jesus *summed up* John the Baptist: **Matt 11:11** – “*Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist!*”

**Why?** Because John's *mission & message* were the most important of *any prophet* to ever appear & preach in Israel! **Read v.7...**

## And then, the Light *arrives* (read 9-10).

1. The *little* word “*was*” is still a *big deal* in John’s Prologue! We’ve already seen it in vv. **1 & 2 & 4 & 8**. Now it appears *again* in **v.9**. John *never was* the *Light* (**8**)! Jesus *always was* the *Light* (even *before* the beginning began – v.1)!
  - Indeed, He was the *true Light*!
2. What does *light* do? It *drives away darkness*! Light allows you to *find your way*. That’s why Jesus came – to *illuminate* all men.
  - a. The Bible teaches that *all* women & men *live & toil* in *darkness* (cf. **v.5**). But Christ came to bring *light* into *darkness*.
  - b. Jesus *illuminates* (*enlightens*) the world by *fully* revealing *God* to us, and *fully* revealing *God’s plan of salvation*. It’s *true* that *God* is testified to in *Creation* (**Psa 19**) & *His existence & His expectations* are engraved on your heart (**Rom 1 & 2**) & *printed* in His Word. But it takes the *true Light* to make it *all clear*.
  - c. The idea of “*coming*” (**9**) helps explain the action of *illuminating*: Christ can *drive out* your darkness because He *came*! Christ the *Word*, who eternally existed as *God* (**1**), became a *man* **20** centuries ago and *came into* your world. We call this the “*Incarnation*” → *becoming flesh* (again, see v.14)!
  - d. Here’s what you can *take away* from **v.9**. The Bible clearly teaches the *Incarnation*. More than that, the *Incarnation* of *God’s Son* was absolutely *necessary* for us to fully understand *God’s gracious plan for redemption*. **No Incarnation** – no *illumination*! **No Incarnation** – no *Christ*. **No Incarnation** – no *Cross*! **No Incarnation** – no *Payment for Sins*. **PAUSE!**

3. “*He was in the world, and the world was made through Him (10).*”  
John *pulls close together* the idea of the *Word* living in the *world* and that *very world* being *His* creation.
- a. It’s an *echo*, of course, of what we saw last week in **v.3 (read)**. The *agency* of the *Word* in the *Creation (3, 10)* is a clear claim of the *deity of Christ*.
  - b. But now John is preparing to put a *sharp end* on the stick. To *poke you* with an *uncomfortable* – an *inexcusable* – truth.
  - c. *This world* is *Christ’s world* – “*the world was made thru Him*” (creation → ownership → accountability). How would you *expect* His world to receive Him? ...How *did* it receive Him?

***The Prophet preaches, the Light arrives...how would you expect the world to respond?***

## The World's surprising *response* (read 10-13).

1. You get John's point – *right!?! The world **should** have *known* Him!*  
After all – *the world was **made** thru Him!*
2. **“Knowing”** – *Knowing is a very important idea in the Bible – and a strong idea. One man's knowledge of another means more than simple or formal **recognition** – the world should have *loved* Christ & *received* Him & *bowed* to Him & *followed* Him!*
  - a. But *very few **did!** John outlines **3** progressively smaller *circles* in **vv.10-13**. In the end, only the **3<sup>rd</sup>** & *smallest* audience truly *knows* the *Light* when He *shines* on them.*
  - b. Here are those **3** circles: Christ's *entire world*, His *own nation*, His *elect sheep*.
3. The *Light* came into the ***world – human-kind (9&10)***. As Christ comes, the Father is fully *revealed* in His Son. God's gracious offer of salvation is *announced & accomplished* by the Savior. But as we've already said, the world did **not** *know* Him. They **should** have – but they ***didn't***.
4. **Let's read about the **2<sup>nd</sup> circle** in v. 11.** Jesus didn't simply come to ***all mankind***. There was a *specific & theologically huge* sense in which He came to ***His own***. There are **2** *versions* (Gr. text) of this same small expression: *His own*.
  - a. The *first*, more exactly, means – *His own **things**, or His own **place**: Israel → Jerusalem*. Jerusalem was called the *City of David* – the City of Israel's *Great King!*
  - b. The *second* reading is this – *His own **people***. So the *Light* came to His *own **land** & His own **people***.
  - c. It seemed to *start out* pretty well. They **hung** on Jesus' *teaching*, were **astonished** at His *authority*, **loved** His *miracles*, **tried** to make Him *king*, **lined** the *road* coming up into *Jerusalem*, they **cried**, ***“Hosannah! Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!”***

- d. Then..., 4 days later: “**Crucify Him...His blood shall be on us and on our children!**”
- e. **Darkness** rejects *Light*. **Creature** rejects *Creator*. **Nation** rejects *King*. **Slave** rejects *liberator*. **Drowning man** *curse*s the *life preserver*, **folds** his arms tight around himself...and **smugly sinks to the bottom!** Yet John’s not finished...
5. **But** as many as received Him...John likes **contrasts** (*all things & nothing; Light & Darkness*), and now (12) the apostle *paints* a great *big contrast* with a very *small word* – “**but**”...
- a. **But some** received Him. The world *He created* failed to *know* Him. *His own people* refused to *receive* Him. But **some**...
- b. That expression (12) – “as many as ... to them” – was an Aramaic *idiom* – like “*whosoever*.” It pictures a *sadly smaller* group than *Israel* – His own nation (11). It’s certainly a *stunningly smaller* group than *humanity* – His world (10)!
- c. **But some believe** (12b). John is *introducing* perhaps the most *important message* in His entire *good-news* story of Jesus: *salvation is granted thru believing in Christ*. *Salvation has come through faith in God’s Son!*
- d. *Believing* is the critical condition of John’s *salvation offer*. You can see here that *believing* is **more** than mere *intellectual assent*. John weaves together **strong** ideas like *believing & receiving & knowing*. And the object of *believing* is the **name of Christ**. **I.e., “name” = all** that He *is* & **all** that He *does* & **all** that He *promises* & **all** He *requires* of you.
- e. And with *believing* comes the *granting* of a *right*: the *right* to enter God’s *family*. To receive the *adoption* as His sons & daughters. The Bible teaches (e.g. Rom 8, Gal 4) that God *redeems* us to *adopt* us as His children. We are now *co-heirs* with Christ – *Jesus’ little brothers & sisters!*



6. When you *compare v. 10 to v. 11 to v. 12*, its clear that **not** everyone *believes*, **not** even those you'd assume *should*. So why do the *few* & the *surprising* receive Him? John uses **3 negatives (13)** to tell you how it **won't** happen, then how it *must* (**read v.13**)!
- a. It's **not** about *us*! Not our *heritage* (blood/ancestry), nor our *desire* (will of the flesh), nor our careful *plans* (will of man).
  - b. Salvation is *completely* from God. John draws another *big black line (but)* between our *ability/will* & God's *grace*. And he uses the *begotten/born* word, **one** more time. You *believe* in Jesus & you *receive* the *right of adoption* because God **begat** you to *new life*.
    - i. You **can't** *begat* yourself!
  - c. John is saying, **not for the last time**, it's only the *elect* who believe (**6:37, Jesus**): "**All that the Father gives Me will come to Me....**"

The **prophet** *preached*, the **Light** *shines*, and **mankind** *responds* – but **not** His *world...*, **nor** His *nation...*, **only** His *own*.

If Christ *preached* from **this** pulpit next Sunday, and then gave an *invitation* for you to *repent & believe*...would you *follow* Him?

If you think the answer is **obvious** – take *one more look* at our text!

Just because you **should** respond – doesn't mean you *will*. That's a *sobering* truth...

**Nothing** has changed in **2000** years. There are *still* only **2** ways people *respond* to Jesus!

**Refuse** Him, or **receive** Him.

**How**...!?! How do you *receive* Jesus? *Just do* what the text says:

- **See Christ** – as *God* coming into our world as a man. *Savior* crucified for sinners. *Raised* on the **3<sup>rd</sup>** day. Alive *right now*, as *Savior & Lord*.
- **Believe** – these Gospel's claims are *true*. Jesus *is* who He said & *did* what He promised.
- **Receive** – *embrace* Him. *Saving faith* is more than simply *agreeing* to a list of Bible facts! It is *turning to Jesus* and *trusting Him* with all your *heart, soul, mind & strength*.
- Here is some advice as you *wrestle* to *receive Him*: don't *hide* from Him – **beg Him to come for You** (2X)!

So listen carefully to **God's** *promise* to sinners: “*Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved!*”

...*pray*...